

The finishing touches were put when Sir Samuel Hoare visited Paris on December 7-8, in return for Abyssinia's access to the Red Sea in the south of Eritrea, Italy was to obtain a large slice of her territory in the north-east in full sovereignty, with a sphere of settlement and economic penetration in the south which would remain under the suzerainty of the Emperor and the administrative supervision of the League. Taken together the cuts represented about half the country, the conquest of which had hardly begun. In view of the subsequent collapse of resistance, so much more rapid than the military experts anticipated, it might perhaps be regarded retrospectively as the best solution; but two vital considerations were left out of account. The Emperor was in no mood to compromise with the aggressor, and British opinion, which had appkuded the declaration of September ii, could hardly approve a *volte-face* so rapid and so complete. When the secret was prematurely revealed in the French press on December 9, the Baldwin Cabinet stood by the Foreign Minister till the outburst of popular indignation, led by Austen Chamberlain in Parliament and by *The Times* in the press, induced the Prime Minister to drop the scheme and its author. "These proposals," declared the Emperor, "are the negation and abandonment of the principles on which the League, of Nations is founded. For Ethiopia they would consecrate the amputation of her territory and the disappearance of her independence for the benefit of the State which had attacked her." To this measured condemnation nothing need be added by the historian or the moralist.

The Government's defence was of the most perfunctory character. Mr. Baldwin, visibly ill at ease, confessed that the

protest had come from the heart of the people and he recognized it as decisive. Lord Halifax, Leader in the Upper House, explained that Sir Samuel Hoare carried no instructions from his colleagues, and that on reaching Paris he found the French Government anxious to accelerate conciliation. The Government, he added, did not like the terms when they saw them, though they, were not so bad as public opinion believed, and the Italian Government was not particularly enamoured of them. It had been impossible to repudiate the Foreign Secretary, absent and unheard. Yet they had made the mistake of failing to appreciate the damage which, rightly or wrongly, the terms would be held by public opinion to inflict on the cause we were pledged to serve.